



What are the origins of Halloween?

Found at www.holidayorigins.com

The name Halloween means the evening before All Hallows or All Saints Day. While the name implies a Christian origin, its beginnings are clearly Pagan. The Druids, and later the Celts, combined celebrations of their New Year and the honoring of the Sun God, the Lord of the Dead. Just as other New Year celebrations signify the passing or death of the old year and the birth of a new year, so is it with the ancient traditions surrounding this holiday.

On this day, the Celts believed the dead came back amongst the living to seek redemption. The sinful souls were forced to take the bodies of animals and through animal sacrifice; their spirits were released from their animal bondage to seek a higher reward. In pagan times, horses and humans were commonly sacrificed. Later black cats were sacrificed because they were thought to be friends of witches.

In the eighth century, Pope Gregory III declared November 1 as All Saints Day to honor the sanctity of all the saints. The evening before All Saints Day became known as a day favored by witches, sorcerers, and evil spirits. While all religious relationships have passed, many of the typical pagan traditions remain.

The practice of dressing up in costume begging for food goes back to the pagan New Year's feast. During the feast, it was believed ghosts hung around the tables of food. As soon as the feast was over, the people would dress up in costumes representing the dead to drive the spirits out of town. There are other explanations of the costumes relating to All Saints Day.

The history of the "trick" from "trick or treat" probably relates to Mischief Night. There was an old belief that ghosts and fairies roamed the roads on Halloween night curdling milk and doing other mischievous things.



the LORD....."

What does the Bible say about Halloween?

What does the Bible say about Halloween? Nothing. But it does speak concerning witches, the occult, and paganism.

Exodus 22:18, *You shall not let a witch live.*

Deut. 18:10-12, *"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to*

The Bible definitely speaks negatively about occultist practices, spirits, and witches and condemns not only the practice but also the people who are involved in it. As Christians, we are to have nothing to do with the occult. Tarot Cards, contacting the dead, séances, lucky charms, etc., are all unbiblical and can harm a Christian's fellowship with God and open the Christian to demonic oppression. Most Christians

know this and avoid these activities. But, the question still remains. Since there are ancient pagan connections and present occultist connections, what is the Christian to do?

Can the Christian celebrate Halloween?

The answer is simple: Yes and No. Let's look at the negative first. The Christian is not to be involved with or support the occult, witchcraft, demonism, or any other thing that uplifts the occult. To do so is to contradict God's word, dabble in demonic spirits, and invite judgment from God. If a Halloween celebration is centered on demons, devils, spirits, etc., I would say don't have anything to do with it. On the other hand, it isn't wrong to dress up in a costume and go door-to-door saying 'Trick or Treat.' Provided that the costume isn't demonic, I can't see anything wrong with this. It's just fun for the kids. Take a look at the Christmas tree. It was originally an ancient fertility symbol. Yet, it has become a representation of Christmas and the place where gifts are placed. Are the Christians, then, paying homage to an ancient pagan fertility god? No. Not at all. They do not consider it pagan at all and are simply joining in on a cultural event and giving no honor to anything unbiblical. In the Bible in 1 Cor. 10:23-33, Paul speaks about meat sacrificed to idols. This meat was often sold in the meat market and the question arose, "Should a Christian eat such meat?" Paul said in verse 25, *"Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience' sake."* This is most interesting. He says it is okay to eat the meat bought in the market place even though that meat may have been sacrificed to idols. Then in verses 28-29 he says, *"But if anyone should say to you, 'This is meat sacrificed to idols,' do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake; ²⁹ I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?"* (NASB). Paul is saying that if you find out the meat was sacrificed to idols, don't eat it -- not because of you, but because of the other person. In other words, eating that meat won't affect you. But, it may affect the attitude of another who does not understand the freedom the Christian has in Christ. Is it any different with Halloween (or Christmas)? No. Even though Halloween has pagan origins, because of your freedom in Christ, you and/or you kids can dress up in costumes and go door-to-door and just have fun. However, if you are not comfortable with doing this, then you should not. If you know of a person who would be stumbled by doing it, then you shouldn't either.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to <mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net>